A few weeks ago my daughter went with a friend to see *The Greatest Showman*. She went again several days later, and she has been playing the soundtrack incessantly ever since. She likes the movie so much that she wanted to take me and Jolene to go see it. But Jolene decided that it would be a good date night movie, so the two of us took a night out together, bought some popcorn and drinks, and settled into a couple of those fabulous reclining chairs at Leitersburg Cinemas and enjoyed the movie.

If you aren’t familiar with *The Greatest Showman*, it’s based on the story of Phineas Taylor Barnum, more famously known as the first half of the P.T. Barnum & Bailey Circus. It’s also a musical with Hugh Jackman playing the lead and Zac Efron as a major supporting character.

As with any Hollywood production based on a true story, you can bet that there are elements that aren’t actually true but are used to advance the story. While one may have a problem with that in some cases, a movie about a man who said, “Advertising is like learning – a little is a dangerous thing,” and, “Without promotion something terrible happens – nothing!” (and who is attributed with saying, “There’s a sucker born every minute,” although this is more apocryphal than factual), I can’t really complain about Hollywood stretching (or outright fabricating) the truth in this case.

In the movie, Barnum purchases an oddities show in New York where he plans to make a fortune. The show is a failure. But in a cute scene, one of his daughters says, “You have too many dead things. If you want people to come, you need living things.”
He takes that advice to heart and begins to advertise for unusual people of all kinds with an assortment of talents. He also goes out into the streets and recruits people to join his endeavor. We soon see a collection of misfits – the Bearded Lady, a midget named Tom Thumb, conjoined twins, Dog Boy, the Tattooed Man, the Irish Giant, and others of various colors, genders, and nationalities. In short, these are the freaks of the world.

This newly formed circus doesn’t sit well with the elite, upper crust of society; nor does it sit well with the majority of “normal” people who basically riot in an attempt to close down the show. Toward the end of the film a fire threatens to do just that. But in a poignant moment, the cast tells Barnum that he has provided them a home and they would prefer this home to the way things were.

_The Greatest Showman_ is the story of the Church.

Jesus called fishermen, Roman collaborators, zealots, and an assortment of other men. He allowed women to follow him. He associated with women, foreigners, drunkards, sinners, disabled, and outcasts of every kind. The Church descended from this method of radical inclusiveness.

We, as the Episcopal church, can continue in the vein of Jesus and P.T. Barnum. We need to remember that the church is a place for the living, not the dead. We can adapt one of Barnum’s sayings and remind ourselves that, “Without evangelism something terrible happens – nothing!”

And maybe the best thing we can do is to become a home for the misfits and outcast of normal society, welcoming today’s version of the Bearded Lady, Tom Thumb, Dog Boy, and others. We can be proactive and welcome people of the LGBTQ community without reservation, loving them as children of God. We can welcome people of different nationalities, status, and abilities; and in the process, doing our best to annoy the “normal” people of society through our radical inclusiveness.

Because, really, what is normal? Normal is simply that state in which a majority of similar people band together to determine the boundary between those who are similar and those who are different. In an original episode of _The Twilight Zone_, two people whom we would consider exceptionally attractive are forcefully relocated to a ghetto of similar-looking people because of their disfigured faces. In the circus, the outcasts were the normal people. In the life of Jesus, the normal people were those who heard and followed the Good News.
We proclaim in a variety of places that “All are Welcome.” The Episcopal church has revised its marriage canon to allow for full marriage equality. We have removed ordination barriers for women and LGBTQ people. We are working to open our eyes more fully to the sin of racism and remove barriers which divide us.

Like in the movie, this process hasn’t been easy, nor is it perfect. But we are trying. We are trying to live into the vision of Jesus to share God’s love with all people and bring everyone into the household of God. And, in some sense, we are trying to live into the ideal of “The Greatest Showman” where even the outcasts are welcomed and given a home.

As we move forward, what if we thought of ourselves not as a church, that institution of normal people representing the elite of society, but as a circus where the wonderful diversity of God’s creation is on display and celebrated.

To borrow lyrics from an old Emerson, Lake, and Palmer song:

*Welcome back my friends, to the show that never ends.*
*We’re so glad you could attend, come inside, come inside.*

So here we are, part of the circus of God, under the big tent that is the parish of St. John the Evangelist.

I hope you enjoy the show.

Blessings,

*Todd*
Music Notes

Guest Choir Concert
The Mercersburg Academy Chorale will present a concert as part of the Music at Saint John’s Series on Sunday, February 18 at 7:00 p.m. The Chorale is an ensemble of mixed voices comprised of students ranging from grades nine through twelve. Because it is a class taken for academic credit, the group rehearses four times weekly. Singing for varied occasions, the Chorale performs a mix of sacred and secular compositions. The ensemble sings yearly for Opening Convocation, Fall Pops Concert, Christmas Candlelight Services, a formal Spring Concert, and Baccalaureate. Off campus performances include Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, New York City; Convent of the Sacred Heart School, New York City; schools in York, PA; schools in south central PA; and here at Saint John’s as part of our music series and at Sunday morning Eucharist. The Chorale is led by Bryan Morgan and Jim Brinson (parishioner of Saint John’s). Following the concert here at Saint John’s, a reception will be held in Trimble Hall. The program is free and open to the public. Please be sure to invite family members, neighbors, friends, and co-workers to attend the concert.

Biblical Reference to Singing #4
I will sing a new song to you, O God – Psalm 144:9

Biblical Reference to Trumpets #3
On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that it startled all the people in the camp. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of Mount Sinai. – Exodus 19:16&17

February Carillon Recitals at Mercersburg Academy – 3:00 p.m.
Feb. 4 – Jesse Ratcliffe (Luray, VA), Feb. 11 & 18 – Jim Brinson (Mercersburg Academy), Feb. 25 – Doug Gefvert (Valley Forge, PA)

The White House Band
The White House Band, featuring Mark Cook, other faculty, students and alumni of Shepherd University Department of Music will perform on Friday, March 2, 8:00 p.m. at the Frank Arts Theatre, Shepherd University. A Meet-the-Artists dessert reception will follow the concert. All proceeds from the event will provide scholarships for current and future music students at Shepherd University. For tickets and information: http://www.shepherd.edu/music/musicshowcase

Choral Evensong
Choral Evensong for the Fourth Sunday of Lent will be offered on March 11 at 5:00 p.m. as part of the Music at Saint John’s Series. More information about the Evensong will appear in next month’s edition of Soundings.
One of the most remarkable achievements and one of the best kept secrets at Saint John’s is the 1806 Legacy Society. The fraternity/sorority has in excess of 50 members. Their names are inscribed on plaques hanging outside the church entrance across from the choir room.

The Vestry created the Society as part of the Bicentennial Celebration of the Parish. The purpose is to honor those persons who designate Saint John’s as a beneficiary of their estate or those who have made living contributions to endowment funds.

Gifts of endowment funds are over and above annual pledges. Endowment funds are invested to provide total return which may grow the funds and give the parish flexibility to expand existing, and encourage future, programs. Investments and withdrawals from those funds are subject to written policies which are regularly reviewed and approved by the Vestry.

The building of endowment funds is a way to “plant trees under whose shade we will never sit” - a way of expressing confidence in the future of Saint John’s for those who come after us. Stewardship involves not only our present resources, but also the responsible distribution of assets accumulated in a lifetime graced by the beautiful blessings of a generous Creator.

Examples of endowments/funds designated by past vestries include:

Unrestricted – Helps support operations of our church
Historic Properties – Keeps our buildings beautiful, safe and comfortable
Outreach – Supports the needs of less fortunate
Rector Support – Provides funds for adequate staffing
Music – Supports our outstanding music program
Cemetery/Columbarium – Provides burial avenues for parishioners
Van Escrow – Provides transportation to church and/or outside events
Hollingsworth Fund – Restricted, but can be used as a source for loans.

Our goal is to encourage others to consider joining a large segment of our parish providing for a bright future for Saint John’s Episcopal Church.

Bill Abeles, Sr., for Christian Stewardship
Reach Week Update

We're in the home stretch with less than a month to go for St John's week at the Reach Cold Weather Shelter for the homeless, **February 25th - March 4th**. Special thanks to those who have already signed up and a special plea to those who might still sign up to fill the few empty slots we have.

The shelter opened its doors to near full capacity the last week of October and due to the unseasonably cold weather the shelter has been at full capacity and into overflow almost weekly.

We are asked to open our hearts to the homeless in service to the Reach mission. There are so many ways we can help beginning with volunteering to assist during St. John's week.

Coordinators Missy McCray and Linda Gray Jones have been setting up in the Antietam Street entrance every Sunday after both services. Please stop by and chat and sign up for a night or two.

Carla Charles has graciously agreed to coordinate all of the meals and kitchen help. Please contact her directly or sign up after services on Sunday if your interests lean toward the culinary services. Even if you're not a cook, she can find a place for you in the kitchen. You must be 13 years old to volunteer in the kitchen along with an adult.

ALL volunteers MUST fill out the ONLINE volunteer application PRIOR to their chosen shift/day at the shelter. Missy and Linda are happy to assist with this for those who require or desire help.

Youth Update

Youth Group

Is always open to any youth in the church in 6th grade and up who is interested in attending. Our normal schedule of Youth Group activities is for the first Friday of every month. These will range from movie and discussion topics, board game nights, outside activities like skating or swimming, and moving forward, hopefully an even broader range. We bookend and frame our activities with prayer, beginning with joining into the larger parish’s Evening Prayer at 5:30 pm on Fridays, and concluding our own evenings with Compline.

We had a planning meeting on Sunday, January 21st to lay out a plan of events for the winter and spring months. Of note, the first Friday of February and March had existing church activities that would conflict with our standard First Friday gathering. Therefore, for both February and March, we will instead be meeting on the Second Friday of each month.

On Friday, February 9th, we will have a Mardi Gras celebration, along with a discussion of where our Mardi Gras/Shrove Tuesday traditions come from, and how to prepare for Lent.

On Friday, March 9th, we will explore the beginning of the Anglican Church tradition, looking at Henry the VIII’s divorce and the context of the Protestant Reformation.

At the end of March, Saturday, March 24th, we are looking at volunteering at Community Café and then going bowling as a group. If any youth/parents are interested in participating, please let me know so that I can make arrangements.

Souper Bowl of Caring!
The Youth Group is continuing our tradition of collecting money and soup cans to benefit Micah’s Backpack, as part of the national Souper Bowl of Caring challenge. We began collections on Sunday the 21st, and will finish on Super Bowl Sunday, February 4th. Everything gathered goes to feed a hungry child in our own neighborhood.

Volunteer Opportunities!
We can always use more volunteers who want to interact and be present in the lives of our youth at St John’s. If you are interested in helping out, or want to know more about what types of volunteering are most needed, please contact Margaret Clinch and she will be glad to put you to work! A perennial volunteer opportunity is Children’s Chapel: exploring the Sunday’s gospel lesson with children in grades 6 and under during the first half of a Sunday service.
Lent Madness 2018

The Saintly Smackdown is Back!

By now you’ve heard that Ash Wednesday and Valentine’s Day coincide this year. The real Lenten love, however, kicks off the next day on February 15. Why? Because for the ninth year running, people of faith are gearing up for Lent Madness, the beloved “saintly smack-down!”

With its unique blend of competition, learning, and humor, Lent Madness allows participants to be inspired by the ways in which God has worked through the lives of saintly souls across generations and cultures. Throughout Lent, thirty-two saints will do battle to win the coveted Golden Halo. Based loosely on the NCAA basketball tournament of a similar name, this online devotion pits saints against one another in a bracket as voters choose their favorites throughout this penitential season.

Here’s how to participate: on the weekdays of Lent, information is posted at http://www.lentmadness.org about two different saints. Each pairing remains open for 24 hours as participants read about and then vote to determine which saint moves on to the next round. Sixteen saints make it to the Round of the Saintly Sixteen; eight advance to the Round of the Elate Eight; four make it to the Faithful Four; two to the Championship; and the winner is awarded the coveted Golden Halo.

The first round consists of basic biographical information about each of the 32 saints. Things get a bit more interesting in the subsequent rounds as we offer quotes and quirks, explore legends, and even move into the area of saintly kitsch.

This year Lent Madness features an intriguing slate of saints ancient and modern, Biblical and ecclesiastical. 2018 heavyweights include John the Evangelist, Margaret of Scotland, Richard Hooker, Katharina von Bora, and the apostles Peter and Paul.

The full bracket is online at the Lent Madness website http://www.lentmadness.org and, while not necessary to participate, you can order The Saintly Scorecard: The Definitive Guide to Lent Madness 2018 at http://www.forwardmovement.org. This companion guide includes biographies of all 32 saints, a full-color bracket, information about how to fully participate, and a series of Pocket Lent trading cards.

Lent Madness began in 2010 as the brainchild of the Rev. Tim Schenck, an Episcopal priest and rector of St. John’s Church in Hingham, Massachusetts. In seeking a fun, engaging way for people to learn about the men and women who make up the church’s calendar of saints, Schenck devised this devotion. Combining his love of sports with his passion for the lives of the saints, Lent Madness was born.
Starting in 2012, Schenck partnered with Forward Movement (the same folks that publish Forward Day by Day) executive director Scott Gunn, to bring Lent Madness to the masses. Schenck and Gunn form the self-appointed Supreme Executive Committee, a more-or-less benevolent dictatorship that runs the entire operation.

The formula has worked as this online devotional has been featured in media outlets all over the country including national television, the Washington Post, NPR, USA Today, and even Sports Illustrated (seriously). More importantly thousands of people have been inspired by the saintly stories of those who have come before us in the faith.

Eleven “celebrity bloggers” from across the country have been tapped to write for the project: the Rev. Amber Belldene of San Francisco, CA; the Rev. Laurie Brock of Lexington, KY; the Rev. Megan Castellan of Kansas City, MO; Anna Fitch Courie of Honolulu, HI; Dr. David Creech of Morehead, MN; Neva Rae Fox of Somerville, NJ; the Rev. David Hansen of Woodlands, TX; Emily Miller of Chicago, IL; Carol Howard Merritt of Chattanooga, TN; The Rev. Marcus Halley of Minneapolis, MN; and the Rev. David Sibley of Manhasset, NY. Information about each of the celebrity bloggers and the rest of the team is available on the Lent Madness website.

If you’re looking for a Lenten discipline that is fun, educational, occasionally goofy, and always joyful, join the Lent Madness journey. Lent needn’t be all doom and gloom. After all, what could be more joyful than a season specifically set aside to get closer to Jesus Christ?

Help Needed

We are looking for a team of three to four people who are willing to take the Easter and Christmas flowers down and deliver them to shut-ins or Nursing Homes. This is a service that has not been done in several years. Jean Barrie did it for many, many years but since her death no one has taken it on. At the present time the beautiful flowers that are used to decorate the church at Easter and Christmas most of the time are thrown out for lack of people to deliver them. If you are interested in taking this service on please call Melonie at the church office or E-mail her. If you have any questions, please call Deanna Soulis at 301-733-7432 or Joyce Chabot at 301-791-1388.
ST. JOHN’S SHELTER MORTGAGE PAYOFF

St. John’s Shelter was incorporated 32 years ago in February of 1986 as an organization to provide a sheltering embrace for homeless families. The Shelter admitted its first family in April of 1987. At that time our St. John’s Shelter, a three-apartment building that was half of a duplex on Randolph Avenue, was the only shelter for homeless families in Washington County. Two apartments were dedicated to the housing of homeless families and one apartment was reserved for a caretaker family.

Ten years later in 1997, the opportunity to purchase the second half of that duplex became available. A Board member at that time, Rob Noland, who had extensive experience in obtaining grant monies for non-profit entities, arranged for a Community Development Block Grant [CDBG] so that the Shelter might buy and renovate the second half of that duplex to provide three more apartments to house homeless families.

The Shelter’s obligation to fulfill the Block Grant requirements was to undertake a $23,750 loan for 20 Years at 1% APR. That was in February 1998. And now in February 2018 that loan will be fully paid off.

This milestone is another achievement for that outreach ministry that we know as St. John’s Shelter. We, as a parish family, can indeed be very proud of what this ministry has given to that community beyond our confines in advancing and living out the message of Jesus.

Bill Soulis
Treasurer
HATS OFF TO:

• Our successful scholastic St Johns Kids! These include Matthew Gross , Haley Burkholder, Matthew and Nathanael Mummert , Brent Martin, and Christina Argueso for making Honor Roll. Matthew for also scoring an advanced rating on the NOCTI (the test to graduate from Career Tech) and Caroline Happel for being selected to interview for the Boonsboro Magnet Program!

• Our equally talented St. John’s kids in music and dance! Celie Gross was selected for the Washington County All-County Band and Nathanael Mummert for the County Band. Haley Burkholder, who received an invite to attend the World Dance Pageant (similar to the Miss America Pageant), will compete in talent, evening gown, and interviews. And to Claire Kaetzel and Haley Burkholder as they officially begin dance competition February 9-11th in Richmond, Va.

• Before I end February’s “Hats Off” Accolades…. Wanted to take a moment to give a shout out to all of our never-giving-up, staying-strong-through-adversity, loving-one-another-through-hardship, and taking-a-not-great-day-and-finding-joy-in-it St. John’s Folks! If you are wondering who this includes, next time you see a mirror, stop and take a look. There YOU are.

Keep me in the loop by sending information to my email address: uofapsu@verizon.net. Feel free also to pull me aside to share your good news so I may share it with St. Johns.
January, 2017

Dear Friends of Holy Trinity Music School,

We trust that the seasons of Christmas and this New Year have been good for you and yours.

We write to you regarding support for Holy Trinity Music School (HTMS) (Ecole de Musique Ste Trinite (EMST)) in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. HTMS, as you know, is made up of the student body of approximately 1,700 students with 43 faculty & 15 administrative staff, l’Orchestre Philharmonique Ste Trinite (OPST) and the choral groups including Les Petits Chanteurs and La Schola Cantorum. You may have met one or more of these musicians on one of their tours in the United States, Canada, Spain, the Dominican Republican or in Haiti itself. It is on this basis that we write to you.

In response to a variety of requests from those of you wishing to keep in touch with or to make a donation for Holy Trinity Music School, we are taking a number of steps:

A. We will be sending a monthly newsletter with the latest news on:
   - the Music School
   - the choral groups of Les Petits Chanteurs (LPC) and La Schola Cantorum de Ste Trinite
   - l’Orchestre Philharmonique Ste Trinite (OPST)
   - International Tours and Concerts

B. We are also establishing an USA not-for-profit “Friends of Holy Trinity Music School” that will feature:
   - a Website - www.friendsHTMS.org
   - a Facebook Page - www.facebook.com/friendsHTMS
Note: From Port-au-Prince, ‘Ecole de Musique Ste Trinite’ (HTMS) will continue its Haitian website, Facebook Page and Instagram in French:
   a. Website: saintetrinitemusique.wixsite.com/saintetrinitemusique
   b. Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/saintetrinite
   c. Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/saintetrinitemusique

Be sure to visit those pages and follow them from your own social media accounts.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to Educ’Art, an organization which assists musicians with concerts and tours, for the arrangement of the United States Concert Tour this past September and October. These wonderful concerts with both vocal and instrumental Haitian music were enjoyed by over six thousand people from Atlanta to New York.

Thank you.

Stephen       Tracy       Pere David
(any Rev.) Stephen Davenport   (any Rev.) Tracy Bruce   (any Rev.) David Cesar

How to give:

   By check: Until approval is given by the USA-IRS to our non-profit, donations may be sent to:
             St. John’s Episcopal Church Western Run Parish
             3738 Butler Road
             Reisterstown, MD  21136
             Please make your check out to “St. John’s Church” with “HTMS” or “Holy Trinity Music School” written in the notation on the check.

   By PayPal: Please Ctrl+Click the following link to donate through PayPal:
             https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=U5HQMRPVQAJPN

Follow us on Facebook and the Websites to receive additional updates and see photos/videos of the life of the school.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Whitney Jarrett  2/2        Douglas Ridenour  2/17
Joyce Chabot    2/3        Matthew Sheridan  2/18
Rachel Hebb     2/5        Jon Hart          2/25
Ericka Alvestad 2/9        Camila Perryman  2/25
Alan Brown      2/11       David McKinley   2/27
Mary James       2/11      Connie Nakopoulos 2/27
Daniel Meyer    2/15       Terrelyn Greszler 2/28

Happy Anniversary!

Brian & Sarah Miller  2/07
Bill & Frances Young  2/15
Alan & Eleanor Brown 2/28

Dessert Auction

J2A will be doing a dessert auction on February 4 after the 10:15 service. Come get your decadent desserts before Lent or that last minute dessert to take to super bowl parties.

Christmas Photos/DVD

Available for parishioners: Set of Christmas photos for 2017 + video of children’s pageant on a DVD. Please send me your name and address plus $5.00 for shipping, and I will send you a DVD in a paper sleeve. helenstevens3@gmail.com.

Helen Stevens
14028 Village Mill Drive, Apt 301
Maugansville, MD 21767